

THE WAYS TO GOD

341

3. THE WAYS TO GOD

That it is important for the Sarakatsani to be in a right relationship with God, hardly needs to be emphasized. The margin of security possessed by each family in its relative isolation is narrow. There are many anxieties; the sickness of children, the diseases of sheep, the scarcity of pasture, social prestige, and personal health. These are matters which concern each family separately, and each family in seeking to enlist God's aid and mercy attempts to establish a particular relation with Him which ignores, in this context, their fellowship with other men. In their simple and frankly pragmatic prayers it does not occur to them to pray for other men, or suffering humanity. [277]

The everyday religious life is essentially a family cult. On a shelf, in the corner of the hut, or in a niche in the wall, are one or often two icons before which stands an open glass oil-lamp. The lamp is lit on the eve of each Sunday or important feast-day and burns through the night. In front of this simple iconostasis each member of the family stands for a moment when he gets up and before he goes to sleep. The adult men, except when they are in trouble, merely cross themselves rapidly three times but the youths and most of the women remain long enough to say a short prayer. Those who know the whole or part of 'Our Father' will recite this to themselves but they will also make some kind of general petition. A mother will say, 'O God protect us, the little ones, and my husband, and give us health and good luck (Θεέ μου νά μᾶς φυλάξης τὰ μικρά, τὸν ἄντρα μου, νά μᾶς δώσης γειά καὶ καλὴ τύχη).

Through the day a man (or woman) will make the sign of the cross three times when he finds himself in certain situations. A man signs himself when he suddenly confronts some danger; here it is an unspoken prayer for divine aid. He crosses himself before undertaking any important task that without God's protection may not turn out well; an example is the milking of sheep where there is always the fear of a small yield or finding diseased udders; another is the moment of setting out on a journey. After an important task is completed successfully a man again crosses himself to express his gratitude and relief. The sign of the cross is made before the members of the family share in the communion of their common meal. The sign [264]

788 expresses respect when an individual passes a church or any ^{The sign}
 • (778) other sacred object. And it is also used to repulse any assault
 (789) of the Devil whether this comes in the form of physical attack or
 moral temptation. In the summer when for a few weeks the
 villages have visitors from the towns, it is not uncommon to
 see a young shepherd cross himself when he passes a girl
 wearing a short-sleeved dress.

The sign of the cross is a remembrance (ἐνθύμιον) of Christ.
 'If you make the cross, you remember Christ and he protects
 you', was one view which expresses the general belief. It is a
 symbol, but also more than this. It is a channel by which
 God's power and grace descends to man by virtue of the
 remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, and it is a means through
 which man's gratitude and respect mount to God. But most
 Sarakatsani insist that the sign, like the sacraments themselves,
 is not efficient *ex opere operato*, as the theologians would say; but
 only if a man repents his sins and has a 'good heart'.

782 These are the simple everyday acts of direct communion
 776 with God which in the main are general petitions for God's
 protection. But from time to time a man meets serious diffi-
 culties or misfortune. He is in great financial trouble, or his
 honour is affronted; specific and considerable favours are
 required of God. A direct petition is always possible but here
 men think of two things; that God is the Father of all men, or
 at least all Greeks; and that even if his judgements sometimes
 appear capricious and difficult to understand he is neverthe-
 less, in principle, just and impartial. Yet God is asked for
 particular benefits, the granting of which may exclude others,
 in this respect, from the favour of God. It, therefore, seems more
 prudent to establish a relationship with a lesser but more easily
 approachable spiritual Being who will make an intercession to
 God or use his delegated power on behalf of the suppliant.
 These intercessors are the Mother of God and the Saints.
 Borrowing from his social experience the Sarakatsanos, who
 knows how patrons compete for the allegiance of a greater
 number of clients, believes that the Saints of the Church must
 be concerned about the number of their followers and the
 richness of their votives. They have a motive for partiality
 which God by the definition of his position and nature entirely
 lacks.

776 about diseases of the sheep, pleas to soften the heart of a
 782 merchant who will not grant a desperately needed loan are
 [29] very often made to this Saint. On his feast-day a lamb is always
 killed in his honour by every family except the very poorest,
 an honour which is generally only accorded to Christ at
 Christmas and Easter, and to the Mother of God on the feast
 of the Assumption (15th August). 'All the Saints look for us to
 sacrifice a sheep to them', the Sarakatsani explain, 'but St.
 George protects us'. Sarakatsani respect all the Saints but the
 only others chosen for particular attention are the Prophet
 Elias whose chapels are on hill-tops and who is associated with
 the mountains and the wilderness, St. Theodore another
 mounted warrior hero, and St. Paraskeve. Individuals, of
 course, sometimes turn to the Saint whose name they bear and
 to other Saints who are known to possess specialist powers.

776 If a man has a very important favour to request from a Saint
 782 (or the Mother of God), he will not be content to present it
 ● 778 before his own icon of the particular Saint. He will worship
 before the icon of the Saint in a church, preferably a church
 or chapel dedicated to him. And in exceptionally serious matters
 he may not be satisfied with presenting his prayer to the icon
 of the Saint in his own village if he knows of an icon of the
 same Saint elsewhere which has a reputation for greater
 efficacy. The icon is not simply an image which serves to
 remind the worshipper of spiritual realities, it is a material
 object in which he believes divine energy is localized. He
 believes that if he approaches this manifestation of the Saint's
 power with a 'good heart' and a suitable offering, he will help.
 He agrees that it is the one Saint present in all his icons but he
 insists that one revelation is more efficient than another. In these
 ideas we see the refraction which even divine energy suffers
 when it enters the material and sensible world.

776 A suppliant asks of his intercessor favours which are often
 782 very specific and material. In return he makes some offering to
 express his respect and attachment to the Saint; he may also
 vow a further gift if help is granted. A Sarakatsanos feels free
 to bargain with a Saint in a way that would be unseemly
 towards God. The thought here is that even a Saint is open,
 in some sense, to flattery and honours. He cannot be displeased
 that he is honoured with more offerings of one kind or another

THE WAYS TO GOD

345

than other Saints. Makryiannis, a hero of the Revolution, tells ⁷⁷⁶ in his memoirs how, being very poor, he entered the chapel of ⁷⁸² his patron Saint to offer a silver candlestick if only he might be granted a set of fine clothes and pistols. Sarakatsani behave similarly. Without the least embarrassment the approach is one of *do ut des*. The relations between Saint and worshipper resemble somewhat those of patron and client. But although [771] it is easy to see how the Sarakatsanos projects to some degree the experience of his social relations into his religious life, it is also true that the latter transcends the former. You may bribe a lawyer to act dishonestly but you cannot do this to a Saint. He will not aid in wickedness nor where the suppliant, however great the gift he bears, approaches without a contrite heart. On this point all insist.

Man acquires help and protection not only through personal petitions to the divine Beings in the spiritual hierarchy, although this is the mode of communion which is sought in all critical matters. It is thought that by the grace of God divine ⁷⁷⁸ power enters and issues from a number of material objects. Contact with or possession of these sacred objects and substances are believed to be defences against attacks of the Devil, the envy of other men and general misfortune. The power immanent in the Word of God is released when the priest reads a passage over an afflicted person or when a worshipper kisses the Book. The incense breathed in church, the possession of a candle which burned on the representation of Christ's tomb at Easter, the sign of the cross on a sick man's forehead when made with oil from a lamp which has burned before an icon, all these have 'power'. Blessed water brought from church at the feast of Epiphany is sprinkled over the sheep. Salt, incense, box-wood when these have been blessed and 'read over' by the priest during the service on the Thursday of Holy Week, are kept throughout the next year—*loci* of divine strength. *Antidoron*, blessed bread, which is the remainder of the offered loaf after the seal has been cut from it for the communion cup, is similarly conserved. However, these materials are not simply charms. Their efficiency, as with all the manifestations of divine aid, depends on repentance and a 'good heart'.

God is in communion with men not only spiritually through ⁸⁰⁰

825 /281 cont./
842
789 itself is also a magic act.

825 The head is put in a small bag which the women place in the nearest
842 church where it remains "for forty services." Thus this animal, linked
789 with Satan in the Christian tradition, is blessed, purified, if not
[783] sacred, hence suitable for wearing.
[718]

The Sarakatsani themselves apparently influenced by their fear of black magic, give odd explanations when asked what the role of the viper is in their magic. According to the first account, the head of the viper "protects against magnetism," because the snake is endowed with a special magnetism. They add that "in the villages, during festivals and fairs, you meet fakirs who magnetize their spectators and make them believe that fakirs perform miracles. But one who carries the viper's head is never fooled by pseudo-miracle-workers for their magnetism is neutralized." That this explanation is clever but false is more than evident. A society living in isolation, whose members only very rarely run the risk of being deceived by fakirs--really, /282/ a very harmless danger--does not need such defense. By enlarging this statement a bit we realize that the protection against "magnetism" is chiefly a protection against the dark forces emanating from certain persons, hence from magic and the evil eye. The preceding paragraphs and the circumstances in which the viper head is used converge toward this same point and substantiate our deduction. (89)

89. Moreover, some verses of an Epirote poet, G. Kotzioudas, are revealing. Far from his native soil, he evokes Epirus and with great longing wishes for his return which, among other things, would permit him to go into the country on the first of May in order to find a viper's head which would protect him from spells and evils. (*Hesperus* 'Koris,

T.E., 1956, p. 178). Let us recall that Epirus is the cradle of the Sarakatsani,

[193]

/311 cont./

789 reality. But it is one if we recognize that it is based on, and
793 formulated in, a language of imagery. /312/ Between these two types
114 of explanation there is a difference in method, but there is none
in the goal to be reached. We shall postpone proof of it until we
come to our analysis of myth. For us, the cosmological myth exists
before magic. (116)

116. We should like to recall in this connection the
statement by Durkheim: De la définition du phénomène
religieux, p. 22: "One cannot have rite without myth."

It is what inspires Sarakatsani magic, its reason for existing, its point
of departure.

789 In short, if Malinowski comes to the conclusions we have pointed out,
114 he does so under the pressure of his functionalism, his constant concern
to find "what its good for"--which prevents him from getting at the core
of what is, in the last analysis, mythical thought and hence magic.

The theory of M. Mauss, formulated in collaboration with H. Hubert
in their study Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie, explains
magic as emotion and collective forces. "Magic judgments are almost
perfect synthetic a priori judgments," he says. "One links together the
elements before every kind of experiment..." (p. 117). Magical judgements
are not analytical because the magician "always introduces a heterogeneous
term, irreducible to its logical analysis: force, power, physis or mana.
The notion of magical efficacy is always present and it is that which...
plays the role of the verb in the proposition" (p. 116). And the magical
judgments are a priori because they are "anterior to magical experiments"
(p. 117). Yet, because the very ideas of mana which confers on magic its
efficacy is also an a priori idea, "it functions like a category, it makes
possible the magical ideas, just as categories make possible human ideas"
(p. 111).

/312 cont./

789
778
114

The partial problems raised by these assertions are the following:

1. Though it is the belief in the force, in the "physis," the mana, which leads to the idea of magic efficacy, it is still necessary to see what this mana consists of and how the belief in it originates. First of all, mana is a category of collective thinking. "It is not present in individual understanding, like time and space; the proof is that it has been possible to reduce it very much by the progress of civilization and that it varies...with societies" (p. 112). Mana is a social notion which grants certain beings or objects /313/ a value attached not "to the intrinsic qualities of things and persons, but to the place and the rank which are attributed to them by sovereign public opinion, by its prejudices. The qualities are social and not experimental" (p. 114). To explain the origin of the belief in mana, Mauss refers to the origin of the common belief in the sacred and in mana. "We believe," he says, "that magic is like religion, a matter of feelings" (p. 114). And he adds: "Magic like religion is a play of value judgments," that is to say "aphorism based on feeling, attributing various qualities to various objects which enter its system...These value judgments...are the expression of social feelings..." (pp. 114-115).

2. Now, it is necessary to explain the process by which these "value judgments" concerning the effectiveness of mana and consequently of all magic are formed.

789
778
114

"Now," says Mauss, "only collective needs felt by whole group can compel all the individuals of this group to bring about the same synthesis at the same time. The belief of all, their faith, results from the need of all, from their unanimous desire. The magical judgment is the object of social consent, the translation of a social need, the pressure of which unleashes the whole series of phenomena of collective psychology: this need felt by all, suggests to all the end...The synthesis of cause and effect is produced only by public opinion" (pp. 118-119). And a little farther on he concludes "that at the very root of magic there are affective

/313 cont./

789
114 states, generators of illusions, and that these states are not individual, but that they result from the blending of feelings peculiar to the individual with feelings of the whole society."

3. As for the general, a priori character of magical judgments, their foundation lies in the reflections which we have just cited. "A magical judgment is imposed by a quasi-convention which prescribes prejudicially that the sign creates the thing, the part the whole, the word the event and so on. Actually, it is essential that the same associations be reproduced in the minds of several individuals, or rather a mass of individuals" (p. 118). And we have seen in the preceding how Mauss conceives "the common synthesis" based on common needs.

789
998
114 These points established, two major questions remain for us to examine: /314/ first, how is this convention arrived at, this public opinion which sanctions mana and magic effectiveness in general? And second, if the analysis of a specific magic shows that the latter does not presuppose mana, then what is its vehicle of magic effectiveness, "the verb which binds the elements of the magic judgment?"

[191] To answer the first question, Mauss, citing examples from Madagascar, from the Dayaks or the Pitta-Pitta, tells us that the rite is carried out and a magician operates in a state of collective delirium, of general overstimulation, and that consequently it is this ambience which causes the rite or the medical magic to be accepted as efficacious (pp. 126-127).
[195] Similarly, for medical magic, "the rites which are carried out at home" (the former presuppose public magic) there is an analogous ambience. "We see there a tiny social group...with a head...the magician, and an embryo crowd which is all expectation, all dread, all hope, all credulity and all illusion" (p. 128).

With reference to the second question which coincides chiefly with Greek reality, Mauss (pp. 109 and 110) believes that, though the formerly universal notion of mana was later forgotten, some of it remains all the

/314 cont./

789
788
114
same in the "physis" of alchemists, the "dynamis" of astrologers "as a sort of material, non-individual, transmissible soul...which is still very close to mana" (p.110). And in another passage he tells us that in our societies there is a "state of social disquietude and sensibility in which the remnants of the ancient category of mana give substance" (p. 131), which is expressed in a belief in magic. We see thus that for Mauss, mana, even though scarcely perceptible, is inseparable from magic.

789
114
Now, if we have dwelt at length on Mauss's theory of magic it is because objective analysis of the facts of Sarakatsani magic, without the previous assumption of a theoretical position, has led us to conclusions similar to his--a fact which demonstrates the validity of this important theory. However, between the interpretation of this magic and the explanation that Mauss proposes for magic in general there are certain differences that we wish to make clear.

7
First of all, there is the problem of the process by which rites are formed and of the belief in magic effectiveness. It is obvious that Mauss vacillates among three different methods. He speaks of /315/ social consent, of public opinion, of states of collective exaltation. But the truth is that these solutions do not correspond to the demands of the problem. Consent as such is much too lifeless a procedure to be acceptable as creating the belief in magic, an area too unsettling, shot through with too many tumultuous psycho-social currents to be thought of as dominated by agreements. One clings to magic almost unconsciously after profound vibrations, and not by giving it one's consent. Moreover, from the sociological point of view, we cannot very well see how a society can succeed in obtaining the consent of all its members on a certain question, and how this decision remains valid for subsequent generations. We believe that this formula of Mauss' derives more from a vivid style than

/315 cont./

789 from his known concern for precision. With regard to public opinion,
114 our comments are more or less the same. Opinions are probable beliefs,
whereas the belief in magic is a strong, firm, unshakable belief leading
to acts that are sometimes painful and arduous; simple opinion would
never be in a position to motivate them. Finally, states of collective
exaltation are not frequent and do not pertain to all magic. Among the
Sarakatsani, specifically, perhaps excepting the dance of Pure Monday,
it does not arouse and do not seem to be prompted by states of
collective exaltation.

789 On the other hand, if we take the perspective of the myth, we see
793 immediately that the latter is in a position to impose itself without
114 asking the consent of anyone, that it inspires belief by its very nature.
798 that it covers at the same time with the same effectiveness and the same
effects, instances of exaltation or of simple collective emotions. Likewise,
myth enables us to cope with the thorny problem of mana which becomes
particularly acute when we try to explain the Sarakatsani kind of magic
in which we have found nothing even remotely suggesting the existence of
mana. One of two things /is true/: either this is magic without "mana"
and one must seek elsewhere to justify it; or it is magic in which mana
has been forgotten, and one must then find the entity that has replaced
it. On this last point we might propose that it is tradition or inertia
which, in the absence of mana, continue to sustain magic. But the critical
mind of man /316/ would not be satisfied with the authority of tradition;
and social inertia is a convenient expression that obscures the problem
and is incompatible with reality. What is called inertia is only a
dynamic equilibrium of society. If we now introduce myth in the analysis
of these phenomena, we can understand that the notion of mana is not
indispensable to magic, since myth, by definition, is "an extremely
efficient agent in magic judgment," to use the language of Mauss. Myth
can create magic by itself and replace the forgotten mana. And, what is

/316 cont./

789
773
114
778

more, man as such needs myth to create belief in it. We venture to believe that this last point fills a gap which neither emotion, nor need, nor hope, nor illusion are in a position to fill. Magic is not a disposition of mind or the soul. It is a cultural product, crystallized, objectified, permanent, which, created once and for all, thereafter leads an autonomous life with respect to the motivations, mental states and methods that lie at its origins. Thus it needs a stable source of support other than the precarious situations that have given it birth. It is the same with other products of the mind, knowledge which is based on truth, art on beauty, morality on goodness, etc. etc. For magic, this source of support is myth. Nevertheless, we would be unjust to the great scholar and originator of ideas that M. Mauss was if we did not mention that, well after his theory, he himself, in a statement included in the Bulletin de l'Institut Français de Sociologie of 9 June 1933, made the following remark: "The great effort that we made in the study of ritual lacks balance because we did not make a corresponding effort for mythology." (117)

117. Quoted in N. Leenhardt: Do Kamo, p. 9

789
114

There remains for us to consider one of the last great theories elucidating magic thought, that of L. Lévy-Bruhl. His main idea was the principle of participation, based on the specific mentality of primitives.

According to this author's Carnets posthumes to which we refer because this text represents the final stage in the evolution of his thinking, participation "is a consubstantiality, a communion, a very identity (identity-duality) between /317/ beings and objects. This intimate relation, so characteristic, between these beings and these objects is not generally represented. It is felt; but the objects themselves are represented" (p. 138). Always, according to him, participation is marked "by participation = essential community," identity felt between what participates and what is "participated in" (p. 141), and by

/326 cont./

representatives of the Church and the invocation of God and the saints in numerous magical rites (exorcisms) testifies to the existence of this threshold. The latter, already studied in connection with magic, must now be examined from the perspective of religion.

* * * *

The way in which the Sarakatsani celebrate Christmas, New Year's Day and Epiphany is known to us. Beliefs of non-Christian origin incorporated in the celebration of these festivals have been analyzed in the preceding chapter. However, Epiphany has additional rites of which we have not spoken and which are carried out in the following way:

On that day, throughout Greece, priests make the rounds of houses and professional places and, in memory of the baptism of the Lord, sprinkle human beings and dwellings with holy water. Among the Sarakatsani it is the women who carry out this practice. At daybreak they must set out for church (which they sometimes reach after walking three or four hours) to attend mass and return home with a supply of holy water. They then sprinkle the men, the huts, the sheepfolds, the enclosures, the livestock, the beasts of burden. Thus, it is the women who, in this particular function, takes the place of the priest who cannot make his way to the Sarakatsani konakia situated on the borders of his parish.

In addition to being the blessing of the Church, this practice is a means of purification against contamination by evil spirits (for the holy water absolutely removes the kalikantzari) and, by sprinkling an inducement to fertility and abundance.

In each family a supply of holy water is kept beside the icons, to be used, always by sprinkling, as a means of neutralizing evils and the influence of the evil eye.

The festival of Saint Lazarus occurs on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Its celebration among the Sarakatsani consists of two phases. The first

/342 cont./

761
182 Ultimately, the dead person himself becomes the source of life,
for he knows the secrets of life and death, he is in contact with the
earth, he is likened to the seed.

761
989 One Sarakatsani practice is very revealing in connection with
751 what we have said. When someone dies in armed combat (vengeance, a
brawl, defence of pastures, etc.), his weapon is unloaded, the powder
is poured into water and when the dregs have formed, the liquid is drunk,
for it constitutes an excellent means of protection against illness.
If the person killed used his weapon before falling, the gun is washed and
one proceeds in like manner with the water that is left over. The
efficacy of the procedure lies in the transmission to the living of the
regenerative capacities of the deceased, combined, to be sure, with those
of the powder which is both strong and anti-demonic.

SARAKATSANI RELIGIOSITY

AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION

771 The Sarakatsani attach extreme importance to their religion.
Several manifestations testify to this.

(353)
(718) On the wall of the hut opposite the entrance one can see the
"iconostasis": the icons are fastened there and in front of them burns a
candle (fig. 103).

771
785 Then again, the Sarakatsani adheres scrupulously to the rule of
261 fasting during the days or periods of the year prescribed by the Orthodox
Church" 50 days before Easter, 15 days before the Assumption, 40 days
before Christmas, every Wednesday and Friday, on the occasion of certain
holidays, etc. The Tséligas watches strictly over the observance of
these rules. If he catches someone consuming milk products, eggs, oi ,
(688) meat or fish during these days he expels them from the Tséligato.

771
794
596 On the occasion of the major religious holidays (Christmas, Epiphany,

/342 cont./

771
771
499
596
771
1771
Easter, etc.) a member of the Tséligato, preferably a woman, must go to church, attend mass and represent the group whose constant work prevents the carrying-out of this duty.

/343/ All the decisive moments of life, birth, baptism, marriage, death, represent so many occasions when the presence of a priest is required. Though authors like M. Skafidas (18)

18. Ibid., 1 107.

and Madame Hadjimichali, (19)



Fig. 100